United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/797
2 January 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council holds 69 meetings in 1990, same number as previous year.

- Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on Situation in Afghanistan to visit Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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During 1990, the forty-fifth year of its existence, the Security Council held a total of 69 meetings, the same number as in 1989.

The first Council meeting in 1990 was held on 11 January and the last one -- the 2,972nd -- on 22 December.

The Council devoted 15 meetings to the situation arising out of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. During the course of those meetings, the Council condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, approved mandatory sanctions against Iraq, declared its annexation of Kuwait null and void, demanded that it permit and facilitate the departure of third-country nationals, condemned its aggressive acts against diplomatic facilities and personnel in Kuwait, banned air transport to or from Iraq or Kuwait and demanded that Iraq end the taking of third-country nationals as hostages. It also heard testimony of human rights violations by Iraq in Kuwait. Finally, on 29 November, it authorized the use of "all necessary means" to ensure Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait if its occupation continued beyond 15 January 1991.

Twenty-five of the Council's meetings during the year were devoted to the situation in the Middle East and related questions, including the situation in the occupied Arab territories, Israeli settlement of Soviet immigrants in those territories and the protection of Palestinian civilians, particularly in view of the October 1990 violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The Council subsequently condemned especially the violence by Israeli security forces at the Jerusalem Holy Places. Also covered were activities of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

(more)

For information media--not an official record

On other issues, the Council devoted six meetings to the activities of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) and two meetings to complaints brought by Nicaragua and Cuba, respectively. Four meetings were devoted to the situation between Iran and Iraq and the activities of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) and five meetings to the situation in Cyprus, including the work and financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

It devoted one meeting to peace-keeping operations, one meeting to extending the United Nations military detachment to Afghanistan and Pakistan and two meetings to the situations in Western Sahara and Cambodia, respectively. It devoted two meetings each to the admission of new Members to the United Nations -- Namibia and Liechtenstein. Two meetings were held to fill five vacancies on the International Court of Justice. Another meeting was held in private to adopt the Council's report to the General Assembly. At its final meeting of 1990, the Council terminated the trusteeship arrangements for three of the four entities of the United States-administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The five permanent members of the Council are: China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States.

The 10 non-permanent members of the Council in 1990 were Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ethiopia, Finland, Malaysia, Romania, Yemen and Zaire.

On 1 January 1991, Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, India and Zimbabwe replaced Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland and Malaysia for two-year terms.

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The Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur on the Situation in Afghanistan began today a five-day mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The visit stems from the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, Felix Ermacora, as set out in a Commission resolution adopted last year. He will submit a report to the Commission at its forty-seventh session which will be held in Geneva from 28 January to 8 March.

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3 January 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council Committee monitoring mandatory sanctions against Iraq elects officers for 1991.

- Council Committee monitoring mandatory arms embargo against South Africa also elects officers for this year.

- Secretary-General welcomes announced initiative by United States for meeting between United States Secretary of State and Iraqi Foreign Minister, next week in Switzerland.

- Chairman of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People expresses "anguish and outrage" at recent shooting and killing of Palestinian civilians by Israeli troops.

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The Committee established by the Security Council to monitor the implementation of the mandatory sanctions imposed by the Council against Iraq this afternoon elected Peter Hohenfellner (Austria) as its Chairman for 1991.

The Committee, which is composed of all members of the Council and meets in closed session, also elected the representatives of Ecuador and Romania as Vice-Chairmen.

Established by Council resolution 661 (1990), the Committee was requested to report on its work to the Council with its observations and recommendations. In the same resolution, the Council called on all States to co-operate fully with the Committee in the fulfilment of its task, including the supply of such information as might be sought by the Committee.

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The Committee established by the Security Council by resolution 421 (1977) to monitor the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, this afternoon elected Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan (India) as its Chairman for 1991.

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For information media—not an official record

The Committee, which is composed of all members of the Council, also elected the representatives of Belgium and Zaire as Vice-Chairmen.

The resolution establishing the Committee was adopted by the Council as a consequence of resolution 418 (1977) in which it determined that the acquisition by South Africa of arms and related matériel constituted a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security.

By the terms of that text, the Council decided that the Committee should study ways and means by which the mandatory arms embargo could be made more effective against South Africa and to make recommendations to the Council; and to seek further information regarding the action taken by countries concerning effective implementation of the resolution.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told correspondents today that he was doing his best quietly to find a solution to the impasse in the Gulf before the 15 January deadline set by the Security Council for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

When asked if he had any comments on the recently announced initiative by the United States for a meeting between the United States Secretary of State, James A. Baker, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, next week in Switzerland, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said the American move had been the right one in the sense of presenting a new option to the Iraqis which he hoped they would accept. He added that everybody had to be extremely active during the next 12 days so that military action does not take place. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said he had met today with the President of the Security Council, Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya (Zaire), and with the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Jean Feyder, since Luxembourg was now chairing the 12-nation European Community, in an effort to be in touch with all concerned.

He said he hoped to meet with the Iraqi Ambassador, Abdul Amir A. Al-Anbari, tomorrow, to explore all possibilities to avoid a military conflagration.

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The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Absa Claude Diallo (Senegal), has expressed "anguish and outrage" at the recent shooting and the killing of Palestinian civilians and what she calls the "brutal repression by Israel" of Palestinian demonstrators.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General, dated 31 January, she said that on 29 December, it was reported that Israeli troops had shot and killed five Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip in what was described as the "bloodiest" clash in Gaza since last May. The press had further reported

on 30 December, she said, that the toll of wounded Palestinians on the previous day could reach as many as 250, more than 100 of them in Rajah refugee camp.

A day earlier, on 28 December, three Palestinians, including a small child, were shot by unidentified gunmen near the Israeli settlement of Gush Etzion, north of Hebron, Mrs. Diallo said. On 26 December, Israeli troops had shot and killed two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. According to a recent report of the Data Base Project on Palestinian Human Rights, the latest killings had brought the number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the intifadah to more than 900, she said.

On behalf of the Committee, Mrs. Diallo said it condemned the "indiscriminate killing" and injuring of Palestinian demonstrators by the Israeli army, in "its efforts to suppress the intifadah".

She called for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East conflict, as reaffirmed by the General Assembly on 6 December, in order to protect Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories and to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question.

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DH/799
4 January 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General to meet United States President at Camp David.

- Security Council expresses deep concern about recent violence in Gaza, especially Israeli security forces' action against Palestinians.

- President of General Assembly meets with Israeli Foreign Minister and other Israeli officials in "frank exchange of views" on question of Palestine refugees in occupied territories.

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A United Nations official said today that Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar had accepted an invitation to meet with United States President George Bush at Camp David, tomorrow, 5 January, regarding the Gulf crisis.

Announcing the meeting, which will be a working luncheon, a United States press release made available at United Nations Headquarters said "the United Nations has played an instrumental role in building an international coalition against the aggression that Iraq has waged against Kuwait". It added that Mr. Perez de Cuellar had been a key actor in guiding the United Nations in that historic period.

The Secretary-General and the President will review the the Persian Gulf situation and the international community's efforts in implementing the United Nations resolutions.

In a separate development, the Secretary-General was asked today by correspondents about his meeting with Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations Al-Anbari. Mr. Perez de Cuellar replied that Iraq was interested in starting a dialogue with the coalition led by the United States and wanted a peaceful outcome of the discussions in Geneva, next week [between United States Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz]. He said the Iraqi Ambassador had expressed hope that the Secretary-General would be of assistance to any peaceful solution of the problem.

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For information media--not an official record

The Security Council has expressed deep concern about recent acts of violence in Gaza, especially actions by Israeli security forces against Palestinians, which have led to scores of casualties among those civilians.

Following a series of consultations, the Council held a short meeting early this morning on the situation in the occupied Arab territories at which the President of the Council, Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya (Zaire), delivered a statement on behalf of its members, deploring the Israeli actions, particularly the shooting of civilians.

By the statement, the Council reaffirmed the applicability of the 1949 Geneva Convention -- which calls for protection of civilians during time of war -- to all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. It requested that Israel, the occupying Power, fully comply with the provisions of the Convention.

The Council also reaffirmed its position as expressed in resolution 681, adopted on 20 December last year, by which the Council asked the Secretary-General to make "new efforts" on an "urgent basis" to monitor and observe the situation of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.

Council members urged intensified efforts by all who can contribute to reducing conflict and tension in order to achieve peace in the area.

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The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco (Malta), currently on a five-day visit to the Middle East, met Wednesday with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and other Israeli officials in a "frank exchange of views" on the question of Palestine refugees in the occupied territories as well as on the situation in the Middle East, generally. The visit is the first such ever undertaken by a President of the General Assembly.

Accompanied by Commissioner-General Giorgio Ciacomelli, head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. de Marco then travelled to Gaza for a full day of visits to refugee camps and UNRWA installations in that territory. He toured Beach camp, on the coast, and the Rimal health centre, maintained by UNRWA and the Government of Sweden.

At noon, Mr. de Marco had lunch with Palestinian notables from the territory. He then met with representatives of the Gaza Fishermen Society -- which is assisted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) -- who outlined the impact on the fishing industry of the current political situation. The Assembly President's party also visited a physiotheraphy clinic at Nuseirat camp, and spoke with patients at the Al Ahli Arab hospital.

Before leaving Gaza, the President and the Commissioner-General laid wraths at the graves of United Nations peace-keeping soldiers buried at the British war cemetary there.

In the evening, President de Marco and Commissioner-General Giacomelli held a working dinner with members of the consular corps, with whom they discussed the situation in the occupied territories, the activities of UNRWA and the President's initial impressions of his visit to the refugee camps.

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